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Agenda item 3

GENERAL DISCUSSION ON PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21, FOCUSING ON THE CROSS-SECTORAL COMPONENTS OF AGENDA 21 AND THE CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Draft decision submitted by the Chairman

Major groups

1. The Commission noted that major group organizations were forging strong linkages between their activities and contributions to Agenda 21 and international conference processes and expressed its appreciation of the efforts of those organizations to maintain Agenda 21 as the umbrella framework for achieving sustainable development.

2. The Commission noted with appreciation the series of events highlighting the role of local authorities and the local Agenda 21 process, under the banner of "A Day of Local Authorities", during the current session, and requested that similar projects and activities highlighting the role of other major group sectors be carried out in future years. One such activity, for the fourth session, in 1996, could involve case-studies on partnerships in the work-place, involving two major group sectors: workers and trade unions and business and industry. It could also involve case-studies of successful environmental management/sustainable development policies of small and medium-sized enterprises. In that context, a programme of events focusing on the role and contribution of major groups could be organized on the margins of the fourth session. Governments, international organizations and private sources were invited to provide voluntary funding support for such special events.

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3. The Commission welcomed and encouraged the emerging practice of including representatives of major groups in national delegations to the Commission as an effective way of increasing the participation of such groups at the international level.

4. The Commission reiterated the importance of enabling and empowering partnerships between the governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental sectors in achieving the goals of Agenda 21. It emphasized national-level participation of major groups in the implementation and monitoring of Agenda 21 inter alia, through national coordinating mechanisms, including national councils on sustainable development or national networks of major groups, and recommended that such participation needed to be further encouraged, strengthened and expanded. The Commission:

(a) Noted with appreciation the efforts of those countries that had supported major group participation in the national coordinating mechanisms;

(b) Recommended that both the existing and to-be-established national coordination mechanisms should strive to achieve the representation of all relevant major group sectors in their composition;

(c) Recommended that in establishing these mechanisms, national and local major group organizations should choose their own representatives, in accordance with national consultative mechanisms;

(d) Recognized the importance of efforts to enable the participation of major groups at the international and regional levels.

5. The Commission recognized the efforts of Governments, United Nations organizations and major groups that had promoted major group involvement in inter-sessional meetings and other meetings relevant to the work of the Commission, and:

(a) Recommended that all concerned continue to involve major groups in inter-sessional events and other relevant meetings, particularly with the aim of enabling a multiplier effect in terms of the diversity of major group sectors and organizations invited;

(b) Encouraged partnerships between Governments, intergovernmental organizations and the major groups in jointly organizing future inter-sessional activities and other relevant meetings.

6. The Commission recognized the desirability of increased funding to undertake efforts that increased major group participation in the Commission's sessions, its inter-sessional activities and other meetings relevant to the follow-up of Agenda 21. This would be particularly desirable in the case of major group organizations from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The Commission urged interested institutions to explore the possibility of creating suitable arrangements to that end.

7. The Commission emphasized the importance of regular information exchange. Electronic networks were pointed out as an effective and efficient mode of channelling information between major groups and intergovernmental and governmental organizations. The Commission requested Governments and international organizations, in collaboration with such major groups as business and industry and the academic communities to explore ways of increasing the availability of and access to such electronic systems, especially in developing countries, and urged all countries to seek and enable appropriate public-private partnerships.

8. The Commission, having noted the important contribution of major groups to its work, recommended that the overall access of major groups, including non-governmental organizations, to the work of the Commission throughout the year be defined. Without prejudice to the outcome of the general review of arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations to be carried out by the Economic and Social Council, the Commission recommended that:

(a) In reviewing the arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations, the Economic and Social Council ensure that major groups, including non-governmental organizations, relevant to the work of the Commission are given the opportunity to participate in the Commission's work;

(b) The implementation of Economic and Social Council decision 1994/300 concerning paragraph 24 of the report of the Commission on its second session (E/1994/33/Rev.1) not result in the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission being interrupted. To this end, Roster status should be continued through the completion of any processes resulting from the Economic and Social Council review.

9. The Commission, while noting the increase in the quantity and quality of inputs from major groups, felt that there was a need to ensure that the information submitted by major group organizations for the Commission's reporting process was fully utilized in the analyses under the various sectoral and cross-sectoral reports. The Commission requested the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development to elaborate on that issue to achieve the best and coordinated use of major group submissions and submit the results to the Commission at its fourth session.

10. The Commission reaffirmed that recognizing and strengthening the role of major groups at the national and local levels was important for their effective participation in the process of sustainable development. It requested the Secretary-General to include information and developments in that area in his report on major groups to be submitted to the Commission at its fourth session.

11. The Commission stressed the particular role of youth groups in the context of sustainable development: the young were those who would suffer if long-tern development was not sustainable; their enthusiasm and sense of commitment were necessary elements in all strategies for sustainable development.

12. In view of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in Beijing in September 1995, the Commission stressed the central role played by women in creating appropriate conditions for sustainable development and invited the Conference to fully include the need for sustainable development in its deliberations.